

NEWS RELEASE

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Three Springfield Residents Charged in International, Internet-based Child Pornography Investigation

Worldwide 'Chat Room' Used to Trade Child Pornography

Springfield, IL - Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that three Springfield residents have been charged by criminal complaint with using a private Internet 'chat room' to trade images of child pornography.

Billy Joe Bowser, age 33, and his wife, Melissa Bowser, 26, both of 916 Forrest Avenue (Rear), Springfield, Illinois, were arrested last night and charged in a criminal complaint with possession and transportation of child pornography. A third defendant, Anthony Adams, age 48, of 316 West Reynolds, was charged with possession and transportation of child pornography in a criminal complaint filed March 14, 2006. The affidavits filed in support of the criminal complaints allege that the three defendants possessed child pornography and made it available on the Internet.

The three arrests are related to an international investigation of Internet-based child pornography in connection with activity in the chat room known as "Kiddypics & Kiddyvids," which was hosted on the Internet through the WinMX software program that also allowed users to engage in "peer-to-peer" file sharing.

The criminal complaint charging Billy Joe and Melissa Bowser alleges that on February 11, 2006, an undercover agent communicated with an individual identified as "thunderbird" and downloaded two images of child pornography involving children approximately 10 years old.

(More)

The Internet address of “thunderbird” was subsequently traced to Melissa Bowser. Agents subsequently executed a search warrant of the Bowsers’ residence and allegedly found more than 20,000 images of child pornography on Billy Joe Bowser’s computer, including images of violence and involving children younger than age 12. Melissa Bowser’s computer allegedly contained approximately 150 images of child pornography. Both allegedly allowed collectors of child pornography to download child pornography from their computers using the WinMX software.

The criminal complaint against Adams alleges that he also used a “peer to peer” network to download and distribute child pornography. Agents conducting a search of Adams’ computer allegedly found hundreds of images of child pornography and peer to peer software.

Billy Joe and Melissa Bowser appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Byron Cudmore this afternoon and were detained pending a detention hearing on March 22, 2006. Anthony Adams was arrested and appeared in court on March 14, 2006. He is scheduled for a detention hearing tomorrow, March 16, 2006, at 9:00 a.m.

If convicted, the statutory penalty for the offense of transporting child pornography is no less than five years in prison to 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. For possession of child pornography the penalty is no more than five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Mandatory supervised release for both offenses is any term of years to life.

The charges in these two cases are the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John Childress in the Springfield Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Members of the public are reminded that a complaint is merely an accusation; the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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